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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0298

INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002990

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/08/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV GG RS

SUBJECT: DETAILS ON SWEDISH REPRESENTATION OF GEORGIAN  
INTERESTS IN RUSSIA

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells for reasons  
1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: While the Russian MFA must still officially concur, it appears certain that Sweden will represent Georgian interests in Moscow. Per Russian request, the Georgian interest section will contain both Georgian diplomatic and consular officers, instead of only consular officers, as originally envisaged by Georgia. Georgia continues to offer the same range of visa services as pre-conflict, and reports that diaspora citizens have been pressured to publicly speak out against Georgian President Saakashvili. End Summary.

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Russia asked for continued diplomatic presence  
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¶12. (C) Senior Counselor of the Georgian Embassy Georgiy Zakarashvili told us October 8 that Sweden had agreed to represent Georgian interests in Moscow after Georgia had severed diplomatic relations with Russia. Georgian Charge Shugarov added that of the many countries that offered to represent Georgia, Switzerland and Sweden had made the short list, with Georgia's choice ultimately falling on Sweden, in part due to its previous support of Georgian positions. While Russia's MFA had already informally accepted Georgia's choice, it had yet to respond officially to Sweden's request to open a Georgian interest section in the Swedish Embassy. The interest section would be located in the building of the former Georgian embassy, manned by Georgian personnel, with a Swedish flag flying from the flagpole and "Section of Georgian interests of the Swedish Embassy" on the shingle.

¶13. (C) While details still remain to be fixed, Zakarashvili projected that Charge Shugarov, another colleague in charge of the Georgian diaspora, and himself would remain in Moscow, along with the consul and two vice-consuls. Shugarov was in regular telephone contact with MFA Fourth CIS Department Deputy Director Aleksey Pavlovskiy about the technical details of the new arrangement. Zakarashvili noted that Georgia had initially only intended to retain consular services without diplomatic relations, which Russia rejected. Russia had instead proposed the consular and diplomatic representation solution that was now being pursued.

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Full Visa Service  
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¶14. (C) Zakarashvili confirmed that Georgia was offering the same visa services as it had before the outbreak of the armed conflict, meaning that visas to Georgia could be obtained at the embassy, at the airport, or at the border to Georgia. While Georgia was interested in maintaining that level of service, Russia had announced it would limit its visa services, but had yet to specify in what way.

¶5. (C) Finally, Zakarashvili mentioned that several diaspora Georgians in Russia had reported being pressured to make public anti-Saakashvili statements in order to avoid reprisals.

RUBIN